

EXHIBIT

DATE

HB

1  
2/20/13  
249

House of Representatives  
House Appropriations Committee  
Hon. Duane Ankney  
63<sup>rd</sup> Montana State Legislature  
Capitol Building  
Helena, MT

February 20, 2013

RE: **Testimony in opposition to House Bill 249**

Mr. Chairman and the Committee,

My name is Ron Trahan, councilman of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes ("CSKT" or "Tribes"). The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes expressed its strong opposition to HB 249 before the House Agriculture Committee and now reiterate its opposition before this committee. Besides being just a bad bill, the fiscal note reveals that it is an expensive bad bill that will cost the State of Montana over \$200,000 in the 2014 fiscal year and over \$125,000 every year thereafter.

Our interest in this bill derives from a history that goes back countless generations in which our tribal members hunted buffalo, and we continue to rely on them to sustain us physically and spiritually. When we signed the Hellgate Treaty in 1855 (12 Stat. 975), the Tribes reserved, among other things, the right to hunt buffalo in the Greater Yellowstone area. However, HB 249 aims to give private landowners the right to shoot buffalo on site without having to make any good faith effort notify Fish, Wildlife and Parks. In essence, HB 249 lowers bison to the status of vermin that can be shot on sight. As such, HB 249 is not only deeply offensive to our cultural traditions, it violates the principles upon which the Tribes signed the 1855 Hellgate Treaty.

Not only is HB 249 bad in principle, it is expensive. Fish, Wildlife, and Parks would be responsible for collecting the bison that landowners killed at an estimated cost of \$250 per carcass. This is in addition to the tens of thousands of dollars required to have extra wardens available to meet the bill's "no tolerance" requirement, all totaling over \$200,000 for fiscal year 2014 and over \$125,000 annually thereafter.

Montana should not waste hundreds of thousands of dollars to fix a problem that does not exist. Currently, there are measures in place and cooperative agreements intact to balance both preservation and livestock interests. In particular, the CSKT has been a full partner in the Interagency Bison Management Plan (IBMP), which has successfully increased bison tolerance in Montana and maintained the state's brucellosis-free status. Bison management is undoubtedly a highly complex science, but it is important to note that there has never been a documented bison-to-cattle transmission of brucellosis while the IBMP has been in place.

In sum, the Tribes believe that HB 249 is not only culturally offensive and unnecessary, it is also expensive. Accordingly, the Tribes urge this committee to not approve any funding for this bill.

Sincerely,

Ron Trahan  
Treasurer, CSKT Tribal Council

STAC

STAC

EM